

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 MADRID 00178 102020Z
ACTION SS-25

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRID 0178

EXDIS

FOR ASST SECRETARY HARTMAN ONLY

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, SP
SUBJECT: PRIME MINISTER'S DESIRE TO VISIT THE U.S.

1. I UNDERSTAND FROM AMBASSADOR ROVIRA THAT HE HAS
AN APPOINTMENT TO SEE YOU WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 12.
THE FOLLOWING BACKGROUND MAY BE USEFUL TO YOU IN
CONNECTION WITH ROVIRA'S CALL.

2. ON JANUARY 6 WHEN I LUNCED WITH AMBASSADOR ROVIRA
HE TOLD ME THAT DURING A TALK WITH OREJA ON JANUARY 5
OREJA HAD DISCUSSED THE POSSIBILITY OF A VISIT TO THE
UNITED STATES, POSSIBLY THIS SPRING, BY PRIME MINISTER
SUAREZ. I TOLD ROVIRA THAT I HAD NO IDEA WHAT THE
NEW ADMINISTRATION'S POLICY MIGHT BE ON VISITS, BUT IN
ANY EVENT I HAD MY DOUBTS AS TO WHETHER IT WOULD BE
POSSIBLE TO CONSIDER SUCH A VISIT FOR AS EARLY AS
THIS SPRING. I EXPRESSED THE PERSONAL VIEW THAT EVEN
IF THE NEW ADMINISTRATION SHOULD GIVE FAVORABLE
CONSIDERATION TO A VISIT BY SUAREZ, IT MIGHT BE
BETTER TO HOLD OFF THE IDEA OF SUCH A VISIT UNTIL AFTER
THE SPANISH ELECTIONS, ASSUMING OF COURSE THAT SUAREZ
REMAINED PRIME MINISTER.

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3. ON THE MORNING OF JANUARY 8, I RECEIVED A TELEPHONE
CALL FROM MARCELINO OREJA WHO TOLD ME HE HAD A LONG
TALK WITH SUAREZ THE DAY BEFORE AND THAT SUAREZ HAD
EXPRESSED KEEN INTEREST IN PAYING A QUOTE WORKING VISIT
UNQUOTE TO THE UNITED STATES IN MARCH. SUCH A VISIT
WOULD GIVE SUAREZ AN OPPORTUNITY TO MEET INFORMALLY WITH

PRESIDENT CARTER, SENIOR MEMBERS OF THE ADMINISTRATION AND KEY MEMBERS OF CONGRESS, FOLLOWING WHICH HE WOULD SPEND A DAY IN NEW YORK. OREJA SAID THAT WITH THE VISITS SUAREZ IS PLANNING TO THE MIDDLE EAST AND GERMANY, THE LACK OF A VISIT TO THE UNITED STATES MIGHT BE INTERPRETED AS A SLACKENING IN US-SPANISH RELATIONS AND AN INDICATION THAT THE US WAS LESS INTERESTED IN RELATIONS WITH SPAIN. OREJA MENTIONED THAT THE GOS HAD ALSO HEARD THAT PORTUGUESE PRIME MINISTER SOARES WOULD BE GOING TO THE US IN THE NEAR FUTURE AND THIS WAS ANOTHER REASON JUSTIFYING A VISIT BY THE SPANISH PRIME MINISTER. OREJA ADDED THAT THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS HERE WOULD NOT BE HELD AT THE EARLIEST BEFORE MID-MAY AND THEREFORE MARCH SEEMED LIKE A GOOD TIME WHEN SUAREZ COULD BE ABSENT FOR THREE OR FOUR DAYS.

4. I TOLD OREJA THAT SINCE THE NEW ADMINISTRATION HAD NOT EVEN TAKEN OFFICE I COULD GIVE HIM NO IDEA AS TO WHAT THE POSSIBILITIES FOR SUCH A VISIT MIGHT BE. I COMMENTED THAT ALTHOUGH I WAS SURE THAT THE IDEA OF A SUAREZ VISIT WOULD BE WELL RECEIVED IN PRINCIPLE IN VIEW OF THE IMPORTANCE THE US CONTINUES TO ATTACH TO ITS RELATIONS WITH SPAIN, IT SEEMED TO ME THAT WITH THE NEW ADMINISTRATION JUST SHORTLY BEFORE HAVING TAKEN OFFICE, MARCH WOULD BE FAR TOO EARLY A DATE TO CONSIDER FOR SUCH A VISIT. HOWEVER, I PROMISED OREJA THAT I WOULD INFORM WASHINGTON OF HIS CALL.

5. AS OREJA AND I HAD AGREED THAT WE WOULD GET TOGETHER LATER THIS WEEK UPON HIS RETURN FROM TUNIS, I INTENDED
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TO WAIT UNTIL AFTER THEN TO WRITE YOU A LETTER ON THIS SUBJECT. HOWEVER, AS ROVIRA CALLED ME THIS AFTERNOON TO TELL ME OF HIS PLANNED MEETING WITH YOU ON WEDNESDAY AND OF THE INSTRUCTIONS WHICH HE HAD RECEIVED FROM OREJA (AFTER OREJA'S TALK WITH ME) TO DISCUSS WITH YOU THE POSSIBILITY OF A SUAREZ VISIT IN MARCH, I DECIDED THAT I SHOULD SEND YOU THIS MESSAGE.

6. MY OWN VIEW IS THAT OUR INTERESTS IN SPAIN WOULD BE ADVANCED IF PRESIDENT CARTER COULD SOON PUBLICLY MAKE CLEAR THE SUPPORT OF HIS ADMINISTRATION FOR SPAIN'S CONTINUING PEACEFUL EVOLUTION TOWARD A DEMOCRATIC FORM OF GOVERNMENT. A VISIT BY SUAREZ WOULD BE GOOD CONTEXT FOR SUCH A STATEMENT OF POLICY. I RECOGNIZE, OF COURSE, THAT FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF TIMING A MARCH VISIT WOULD BE MOST DIFFICULT IF NOT IMPOSSIBLE AND THAT ALSO A VISIT JUST PRIOR TO THE SPANISH ELECTIONS WOULD CARRY WITH IT CERTAIN DOMESTIC POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS HERE WITH RESPECT TO SUAREZ'S FUTURE (ALTHOUGH MOST SIGNS

DO POINT TO HIS CONTINUATION IN OFFICE AFTER THE ELECTIONS).

7. IF AN EARLY VISIT IS POSSIBLE, ALL TO THE GOOD.

IF NOT, I FORESEE NO REAL PROBLEM, ALTHOUGH IT WOULD
BE USEFUL TO GIVE SUAREZ SOME IDEA AS TO WHEN WE MIGHT CONSIDER
SUCH A VISIT. STABLER

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